DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 004 SO 018 001

AUTHOR Whiteside, Karen, Ed.
TITLE It's Coming: Electricity For You.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 43p.; For related documents, see SO 018 000-007.
AVAILABLE FROM Loblolly, Inc., Box 189, Garry, TX (Subscription $6.00 a year; single copies, $3.00).
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
JOURNAL CIT Loblolly Magazine; v10 n2 Sum 1986

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ethnography; Folk Culture; Handicrafts; Lighting; *Modernization; *Rural Areas; Rural Population; Secondary Education; Story Telling; *Utilities; Woodworking
IDENTIFIERS *Rural Electrification; *Texas (East)

ABSTRACT

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Act changed farm life dramatically. The miracle of electricity in rural East Texas is examined in "Electricity Comes to East Texas" (Brandi Anderson and others). Chronicled is a description of life without electricity and how everyday chores were done in its absence. Local citizens compare and contrast life styles before and after electrification. Concluding the volume is an interview with H.D. Beasley, an East Texas wood carver who explains how he does his art. (BZ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED298004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

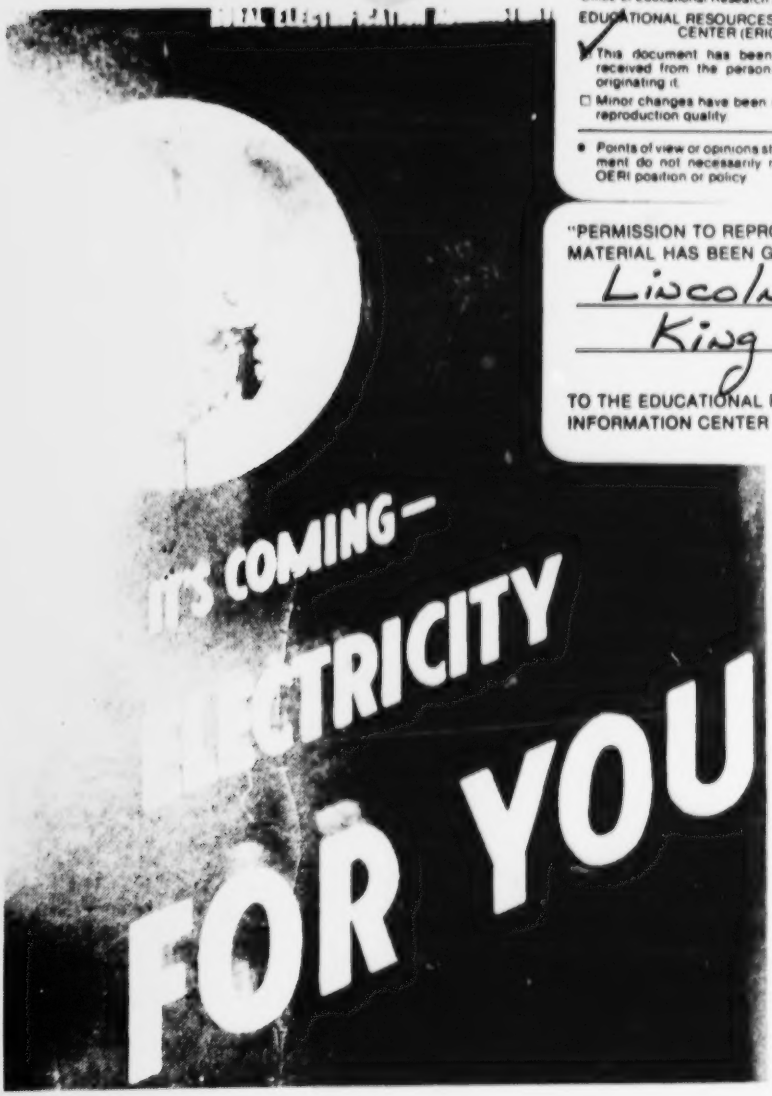
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lincoln King

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



SO018001

Loblolly

Summer 1986
$3.00

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Volume X No. 2 Summer 1986

Contents

2 Electricity Comes to East Texas - By: Brandi Anderson, Ira Barr, Gary Bridges, Alan Couey, Angie Craft, Ronnette Griffith, Tarisa Harris, Mid Johnson, Randy Liedtke, Angie Rousey, Anthony Templeton, Melissa Tinkle and Karen Whiteside.

38 - H. D. Beasley - By Melissa Tinkle

Loblolly Staff

Karen Whiteside, Editor
Teri Alexander
Brandi Anderson
Ira Barr
Gary Bridges
Alan Couey
Angie Craft
Ronnette Griffith
Tarisa Harris
Mid Johnson
Randy Liedtke
Michelle Mims
Angie Rousey
Tiffany Smith
Anthony Templeton
Melissa Tinkle

Lincoln King, Advisor

Loblolly Magazine is published by Loblolly, Inc., students at Gary High School, Box 189, Gary, Texas 75643. Circulation is by subscription and newsstand. Subscriptions are $6.00 a year, single copies, $3.00. Some back issues are available. Copyright 1986 by the Loblolly, Inc.

Rural Electric

The Next Greatest Thing

"Brothers and sisters, I want to tell you this. The greatest thing on earth is to have the love of God in your heart, and the next greatest thing is to have electricity in your house." Farmer giving witness in a rural church in the 1940's.

As each one of us sits in our home, we are able to enjoy the main convenience that has changed our lives in the 20th century. That is - ELECTRICITY! It is the major source for easier living and is what makes it more pleasant and desirable.

Here we take a look back to recall memories of the past. That's when people in rural areas really didn't know what electricity was and what it could do. Thomas Edison had started a revolution in living in the late 1800's but it was slow coming to people living in rural East Texas. In the first third of the 20th century, electricity was available to city and town folks only.

With the coming of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal. Things would change dramatically with The Rural Electrification Act. Finally people on the farm would share in a better way of life. It was a revolution in life style that was recognized by its beneficiaries. We visited with some who remembered how their lives were changed at that time.

Jim Box

Memories of life without electricity are, perhaps, a little bit more clear because, my first experience, we were living in the city. I moved to the country after the first grade. They had electricity in the city. In the country, the lack of electricity was most noticeable, to me, in the light of the lamps.

Washing of clothes by hand - a long days work.

We used coal oil lamps or kerosene lamps. The first ones we had were very dim, with the dim yellow light, you could only read about three or four feet away from the chimney. Which meant in the summer time or in warm weather, reading in front of the chimney was not only hard on your eyes but was a little bit hard on temperature too because you could feel the heat from the lamp while you were trying to read. I remember very vividly the first Aladdin lamp which was a trade name of a lamp that had mantles on it much like you have on your Coleman lanterns today. This was a double-mantle lamp. When the mantles heated up, we had a bright, white, light that penetrated to the far corners of the room. You could sit on the opposite side of the room from the lamp and still read a book. It was a tremendous improvement. One thing about lamps, the old lamp without the mantle, the wick-lamp, had to be constantly cared for. You had to fill the lamp up regularly to keep kerosene in it. You had to trim the wick ever so often. You had to take the chimneys off and polish them. If you let the lamp get out of adjustment just a little bit, you could blacken a chimney in a matter of seconds. If you had it turned up too high and it started smoking, of course, if you had any smoke in the chimney, that would reduce poor light to even poorer light.

The next thing that I recall about the lack of electricity was we had a battery radio which had one of the ear-thumpet type speakers on it. We used an automobile battery, to operate the radio. When the battery started getting weaker, so did the volume on the radio. We were getting stations from St. Louis, Chicago, and other places. There weren't that many stations. As the battery grew weaker, we had to sit closer and closer to the speaker. So, finally, just before we

would change the battery out, my grandfather and I would be nose to nose with our ears in the speaker trying to hear "Lum and Abner" or "The Honey Boy in Sasafrass", some of the radio programs of that time. What we would do on the batteries then, we would take the battery and start the car, put the weak battery on the car, and take the one off the car that charged up and bring it back in and put it on the radio. Sometimes we would have to crank the car because the battery we would take off the radio was too weak to turn over the starter. That was all the things you had to take into consideration, swapping the batteries back and forth.

I also built, at that time, crystal set radios which didn't require batteries at all. You could only hear them with a head set and you could usually only get one or two stations.

We had friends, wealthier, around out in the country. As I recall there were about three families who had electricity that was called Delco Power or Delco Systems. What it was, was a series of batteries, six-volt batteries that were wired in series and these were charged up by wind chargers, something like a windmill. The batteries were re-charged but they allowed them to operate radios and certain electrical units. I think that one of the families had an electric refrigerator that operated off of the Delco System. They had a problem there, of having to constantly replace batteries and the wind charging didn't always keep them up. It was rather a precarious existence on whether your battery was going to hold up or not.

When we first got electricity I remember the cost of it was, by todays standards, almost non-existent. But times were hard and my mother would be constantly telling us that when you go into a room, turn the light on.

When you go out of the room, turn that light out! That way it wasn't on more than a couple of minutes. We used small bulbs in the electric light fixtures where it wouldn't take too much electricity to run them. For a long time after we got electricity, we never had a electric refrigerator. We still used the old ice box. We thought that the cost of electricity was prohibitive here in running a refrigerator. The electricity did bring a few uses for the poor people, not too many uses beyond just light.

It was really quite a luxury to have anything else operated by electricity. An electric water pump was something for the wealthier only, we irrigated, for example, a little truck farm there with a one cylinder monitor engine which was gasoline powered. It had a huge fly-wheel to take care of the one cylinder firing. It would go on for 24 hours or 48 hours at a time pumping a three-inch stream of water. We never even gave a thought to putting an electric motor on it because the cost was just too prohibitive, we thought, with the cost of electricity. The electric radio was probably in my life as a young boy, the biggest innovation that electricity brought to us. You could turn it up loud and it didn't fade away as the battery grew weaker. Later on, I left the country when I was fourteen. We still had nothing electric except an icebox that we had for a year or two. That and lights I suppose was the only thing we had electric in the house. That was six or seven years before World War II so that wasn't that far back in time. People who were better off and lived in the city had a lot of electrical appliances, nothing like we have today though.

Did electricity change our life style? It didn't really, very much, immediately. We had electricity just in the rooms of the

house. We didn't have electricity in the barn. We still carried a lantern to the barn. Some of the wealthier people wired electricity out to the barn. They had a light out in the yard. Even those people in those days still maintained and operated pulley gear for putting hay up in the loft. They didn't have electric motors hooked up to put the hay in the loft. That came about, in this part of the country, much later because of the initial cost. The latter period of time, the few years, say from about 1931 to 1941, there was a rapid increase in the number of electrical appliances and electric helps for the farm that came into being as we began to recover from the depression. By the end of World War II people had a lot of money saved up in war bonds and things. Electrical appliances of all types were in big demand. People were buying them as fast as they were available on the market. The big change in farming down here came about after World War II, an electrical revolution of farming. We had electric milkers, electric hay handling equipment in the barn, electric silos, electric hog feeders. Most of those came into use down here after World War II. It was a fairly recent thing.

Grace Davis

Growing up in the Depression we had no electricity. So there were many things you take for granted now we did not have. TV was unheard of. We had only battery radios and you had to conserve your batteries, so you were selective of what you listened to. You had to draw water from a well, there was a bucket and rope with a pulley. On wash days you would have to draw three wash tubs of water plus a wash pot for heating. This is the way we washed our clothes. We cooked on a

wood stove. You had to split the stove wood and bring it in to fill the box in the back of the stove. You split kindlin' which is rich pine logs or stumps for starting the fire. There was fire place wood also to bring in the house and place by the fire place. That's so it would be there for your dad to start a fire in the early morning. The light you had was a kerosene lamp. This was better than a candle but did not give out very much light. You could only light one room at a time if you only had one lamp. So you carried the lamp from one room to the other as you finished each job in that room. Of course to clean the floors we used a broom to sweep with and then about once a week you would scrub the floors. And most of the time it was done with an old broom, but some used a shuck mop.

The way you kept your milk cool was to tie a rope on a bucket with holes in the bottom. Then you put the jug of milk in the bucket and let it down into the water. You just cooked enough for one meal at a time as you did not have refrigeration to keep things cool. To iron clothes you had to heat the flat irons on the stove. Or if it was winter time you would heat them in the fire place. Later we had a gasoline iron which we thought was really great. We used a treadle sewing machine to make our clothes. We just did not have the money to buy ready made clothes.

Waymon Fitts

I lived in West Texas and came back to East Texas about 1935. We moved into a house that didn't have any electricity. The only lighting was a couple of oil lamps and the fire place. You studied for school before dark or by the fire or lamps. This would get hot after awhile. Most of the time they would

study at night because during daylight hours they did chores. The oil lights didn't put out much light either. To do your work you would have to get very close to the light. In order to light up a room and get around in it, you put one on either side of the room. Or you put one on the mantle over the fire place. You usually kept a fire going all night.

Everywhere you went at night you had to have a light. There was no electricity in the country. They did have electricity in Center. First light I saw was at Hubert Store. He had a gasoline generator that generated DC current, a whole wall of batteries. They were hooked in parallel lines to form electricity. The batteries would be charged for several hours. They were old lead batteries.

Then R.E.A. came in and supplied every one with 110 AC, just for lighting. It cost about a dollar a month to have electricity. It was a great thrill to just reach up and pull a cord and have lights.

Before electricity, they had the old battery radio. They listened to it every night. The main thing was the Friday night fights, Grand Old Opry, and the Louisiana Hayride.

Then when electricity came in they got an electric radio. The reason they got that was because the old radio batteries cost so much. They used real big batteries that weighed an awful lot and only cost $5.00. Then they got an electric refrigerator which was the big thing.

It shocked people because you could run the lines anywhere and have lights. Before the lights people had gasoline Coleman lanterns which were very bright. Some people think the reason older people have bad eyes is from straining them in the bad light. Glasses were expensive back then.

Before electricity, the ice wagon would come around. After electricity and refrigerators came around, a lot of the ice people shut down. The first refrigerator they had was a Serve, and it cost $20.00. They were real tough. Electric fuses for the house were only about one cent apiece.

Cecil Griffith

Before electricity, life was very different from the way we now live. Without electricity all homework and outside chores had to be completed before dark, as it was very hard to study by lamp light. Once, while coloring by lamp I colored an elephant what appeared to be gray. But imagine my surprise the next day when my elephant was purple.

Also before electricity there was no running water. We either had to carry it or draw it by bucket from the well. Washing had to be done by hand, and hung on a line to dry. Clothes to be ironed was very difficult, as the irons had to be heated in front of the fireplace.

There were no inside bathrooms and water had to be carried and heated outside for baths. Things we take for granted now were nonexistent back then. There were no refrigerators, only ice boxes, and most of the time there was no ice. In order to keep some things cool it was tied to a rope and lowered into a well.

Radios are another thing we didn't have. If you were lucky enough to have one it was battery operated. It was used very little, mostly for hearing weather and news forecast. All foods had to be canned, as there were no freezers. There was no power for tools. Cutting wood for winter was very hard. These are only a few of the things that electricity have improved for us.

Frances Barr

Q. How was it before you received electrical power in your home?

A. Well the only light we had was two coal oil lamps. We used to get our school work by coal oil which came in five gallon cans. It would last about a week. Then we would have to get some more. The two lamps we had would light up the room dimly. If one of the lamps got broke or something we would have to start a fire in the chimney to help light the room. Back then we never had candles to help light up the room. All we had were those coal oil lamps. When we were kids we used to build a big bon fire to see by when

we played outside at night.

Before we got an electric ice box we would buy ice and put it in a corner and wrap it up in blankets to keep it cool, until it melted. We would also put milk and butter in the well to keep it cool.

Back then we didn't have electricity to run a deep freeze. So we had to can all of our food that we put up. We would also heat irons either in the fireplace or on a wood stove. We didn't have an electric sewing machine either so we used the treadle kind. Instead of having a washing machine we used a wash tub and rub board.

We also had to draw our own water out of the well because we didn't have a pump to pump the water. We didn't have anything electric in the house. We had to heat our own water on the stove. We had old wind up clocks.

The power company finally came into our house about 1948. That's when we were finally able to get electrical power. But before that my brother put two lights in our house. He ran some wires from a coil and an old motor, a gas power generator. I don't know how he did it but we had lights. We were really the first people to have lights, before the power company put them in.

Q. How did it feel after you got electricity?

A. Oh, it was wonderful. You could do things that you couldn't do before. You could watch TV. instead of watching the radio. I remember when we got most of our electrical appliances. We got our first TV. in 1957. As I said it was a whole lot better than sitting around watching the radio. It was a blessing to us women because when we got our washing machine it was an end to the backache of the wash tub and rub board.

Q. Was it a big change in your life style?

A. Yes, it was a big change. The light bulb was the biggest change I guess. You could finally see what you were doing. It was a very big change from coal oil lamps. But I guess we are used to the way we are now with electricity. I guess it is just what you are used to.

Irene Campbell

I was grown and married before we had electricity...so it was like we never thought what it would be like to have lights as we have today.

The city itself had electricity before the rural areas. We lived in the country which was three miles from town. We had to farm for a living so we would rise at dawn and start our days work so we could get as much done as possible before dark.

We had no running water. All our water was hand drawn with buckets out of the well. We would draw up several gallons to last during the day in the house. In order to keep our milk cold we would tie a rope to the top of a jar and lower the milk into the well to keep it cold. We did not have a refrigerator until much later. We did buy a wooden ice box and the ice man would deliver big blocks of ice twice a week and that would keep our food chilled and keep it from spoiling. Ice was made at a plant in Carthage and delivered to us.

Naturally we had no electric stove and for many years only wood burning stoves and fireplaces for heat and cooking. We cut wood during the summer after all the crops were harvested to last the winter. Later on we bought a coal oil stove but still had to heat

with wood stoves and fireplaces.

We had very little processed food. We grew all our food and canned during the summer and killed our meat in the winter and stored it in smoke houses where it cured.

We had nothing like a washing machine and certainly not a clothes dryer. We washed clothes in a big black wash pot. We filled it with water drawn from the well and would boil the water and wash our clothes. We would rinse them in tubs and hang them on lines to dry.

With no lights, we would burn coal oil lamps at night. This was our only source of light except for moonlight or firelight. We would study or read by the lamps. It was very poor lighting.

We didn't have a radio until the thirties. We bought a big radio that was operated by batteries. Every night after supper we would gather round the radio and listen to the 6:00 news and a proqram.
We were one of the few families that had a radio and we would listen to the news for the latest developments of the war in the early forties. So many of our family and friends were fighting over seas and we would keep up where the bombing was occurring.

In order to take a bath in the summer time we would draw water from the well and fill up wash tubs in the morning and let the sun heat the water. That evening when we would come in from the fields so dirty and the warm water was really nice. We had an outside bath house where we took baths and of course, outdoor privies. In the winter we would bath in the house and heat water on the kitchen stove and fill the tubs. We would usually bathe in the kitchen where it was warm.

We did not have any modern conveniences such as a bathroom in the house, curling irons, washers, dryers, mixers, no heat and

air conditioning. But somehow everyone managed and survived very well.

In the winter time we slept under lots of quilts and kept a fire going in the fireplace. In the summer time we slept on the porches outside to stay cool. Our outside bathroom facilities were probably the most inconvenient especially in the cold of winter.

A great day came on December 11, 1946, REA came to the rural areas of Gary and changed our ways of living. It still took a while for everyone to have their houses wired for electricity. The first thing to come though was electric lights. It certainly was a dramatic change because for the first time we could see everything in a room at night without carrying around a coal oil lamp. Then we had a pump to pump water into the kitchen.

We still cooked for many years on a coal oil stove until we got butane. We bought a wringer type washing machine which was another great invention for the farm family. Indoor plumbing, from Sears & Roebuck catalogs to soft tissue paper, and warm rooms to bathe in was quite a change and certainly a welcome one.

Then of course we begin to obtain things we never dreamed of and things we take for granted today. And we were so thrilled with each and every item we got as they come out on the market, such as radios, record players, lamps, etc. Then it wasn't too many years until the telephone came to Gary and that brought us closer to the rest of the world. Electricity certainly changed everyone's life and brought about things we would have never thought of before 1946.

Kerosene lamps, a main source of lighting.

Rosabell Pass

Q. Could you tell me how it was back in the good old days before rural Texas received power and how electricity changed lifestyles?

A. "Well we had kerosene lamps and battery operated radios. My children used to do their homework by the light of those lamps. I remember wondering, after we got

electricity, how come they never strained their eyes.

Of course we had no refrigerators or television. If we got ice we had to get it in a block and put it in a box that was supposed to keep it.

We didn't have running water so we had to draw it up in buckets. We heated our bath water on the stove and then we would put it in either a number two or number three washtub. A number two is little and round and a number three is shaped like a bathtub. One time, we had a shower stall built at the back of the house. And we ran a hose to a tub on top of this thing and let the sun shine on it all day and then the water would be warm to take a shower. It didn't work too well during the winter time, of course. It was too cold. We called it a green acres shower. I guess because it was at the back of the house.

Q. Do you miss those days? I mean, do you like it better now or would you rather things were still the way they used to be?

A. Goodness no! I'd rather do without almost anything before I'd do without electricity. We'd all be lost without electricity now.

Q. Do you think that families were closer then than they are now?

A. Well, I don't really know. I guess they might have been. Electricity sure has changed a lot of things. We went to bed a lot earlier, you know because we usually listened to the Grand Old Opry on Saturday nights and sometimes we listened to country and western music or soap operas while we shelled peas. There was one soap opera I thought I would never forget and now I can't even remember the

name of it. Of course that has been quite a few years ago.

Even the kids got interested in the soaps when we'd sit around and shell peas and they would have to sit still in one place for a long time. I like modern day soap operas a lot better though because you can see all the people and you know what they look like and it doesn't leave quite so much to the imagination. I love television. I don't know how I did without it now that I have it, I guess it didn't bother me because I didn't know anything different.

When we took baths we usually took sponge baths unless we had been in the field. On days we had been in the field we took tub baths. We washed our hair about once a week.

Q. What do you think is the biggest difference since electricity? What has been the single thing that you like the most?

A. It's probably indoor plumbing, you know, and running water and all that kind of stuff. We have electric washers and dryers now and we don't have to wash clothes on a rub board like we used to. We had a big black washpot and we'd rub the clothes on that rub board for a little while and then we would put them in the pot and boil then for a while. We used lye soap and sometimes P & G.

We sewed on a treadle sewing machine that you pedal with your foot. Well, that is about all I can remember, but I sure do like it a lot better now.

Jo Hancock

Q. What did your family do for entertainment?

A. We did a lot of talking to each other and we were closer. We also had a hand-crank phonograph and a battery operated radio. Our neighbors would come down and listen when there was a special program on the radio because they couldn't afford one.

Q. How did your family do without lighting by electricity?

A. We had a kerosene lamp. And later on we were able to afford an Aladdin lamp which also used kerosene but had a different type of wick and put off a much brighter light! If you were traveling at night you were able to tell which families owned an Aladdin lamp because their house was lit up so much more.

Q. What did your family do for refrigeration?

A. We had an ice man who ran a route, and we bought block ice about twice a week. We would wrap it up in a quilt and place it in a wash tub because we had no ice box. My mother took insulin which had to be kept cool so it was placed in a bucket and lowered into our well.

Q. What did your family do for heat and cooling?

A. In the summer time we sat on the porch until it cooled off enough to sleep. And sometime we slept on the porch when it was hot, and hot wind was blowing. In the winter we used fireplaces and wood burning stoves which kept the house plenty warm.

Q. How did the introduction of electricity change this?

A. One of the best things was to have an electric iron because most of our clothes were 100% cotton and had to be ironed. We were also able to have an electric refrigerator and also a pump for our well. We also got electric lights and this was a big improvement because we were able to see a lot better without the strain on our eyes. I was in school and it made it much easier to do my homework.

Margaret Simonson

Before we had electricity, we used "coal oil" lamps. Not very good light though. Also, for a refrigerator we had an icebox. We used big blocks of ice and in the winter, we had a cabinet-like place where we just put the things outside that needed to be cold.

For heat, we used coal or wood. My husband, Leon, would bring in cow chips or corn cobs. If you burned one bushel of cow chips, you carried out what seemed like two bushels of ashes. For soap, we used a soap weed or a yucca plant. This was used for soap, shampoo, and sometimes even fuel for the fire. And as always, we washed the clothes on a rub board and a No. 3 washtub. Irons were heated on a stove, and we usually had three or four irons, so we would always have one hot.

We had a battery radio. The battery usually sat outside in the yard, and was about the size of a car battery. This was the only home entertainment we had, other than a record player which was hand cranked This was more in the shape of a cylinder than a flat, square box of today.

Also we stored ice in a cellar in straw, for long periods of time, or whenever we needed it, whichever came first. We stored our vegetables in the cellar as well. We stored eggs in a "water glass". This isn't

actual water but a liquid that is thick and clear.

We cured our meat with liquid smoke, wrapped it in heavy paper, then stored it in grain or corn, etc. After the meat had been cured it kept for months. The bad thing about storing your meat in grain is that worms got into it before too long. Since we have gotten electricity, all those tactics have been eliminated. Now there are refrigerators, electric radios, CH/CA, or still fireplaces. Also we have indoor toilets and running water. Electricity has improved our life tremendously.

Joyce Johnson

In the rural area of Huber, Texas, where I grew up, we got electricity in 1947. Houses were lighted better than ever before. It was so exciting and convenient to be able to flip a switch at the wall and have lights to pop on at the ceiling. This was only the beginning of the many uses of electricity.

Before we had electricity, we had no well pump (a few people had hand pumps). Ice boxes were used instead of refrigerators. The ice man came twice a week in the summer, and brought ice and put it in the ice box. This kept milk, butter, and a few other foods cool in the summer time. Looking back, I can remember a time when there was no ice man. To keep the sweet milk cool (that we milked from the cow) it was put in a syrup bucket and lowered into the well by a rope with a snap-hook on the end, snapped on to the pail.

One time the pail came out of the bucket and our milk was floating around in the well which was about 30 feet deep. It was only about 25 feet to the top of the water. Because I weighed less than my older brother, mother and daddy were going to let me down in

The contrasts - picking cotton when electric lines bring the change.

the well on a rope and bucket from which we drew our water to get the milk. Once my head got to the top of the ground inside the curb of the well, I screamed and screamed until they were afraid if they didn't pull me back up, I would fall in and drown. This all happened early one morning before I was old enough to go to school. I'll never forget how frightened I was. My brother had to change from his school clothes to old ones, go after the milk, and because of the time it took, missed a day of school.

There are numerous inventions of electrical appliances, both large and small that has changed the lives of many people.

Family washing is probably one of the most time saving chores done since the invention of the washing machine. First, there was the wringer type washer, next, the automatic washer, the dryers.

The old wash pot, rub board method was both time and energy consuming. Water was drawn from the well and wood had to be gotten for building a fire to heat the water in the pot. The real task was about to begin. Clothes were sorted (whites, colored, and work clothes), and each boiled for about one hour. After boiling, they were taken out and put into the washtub where they were scrubbed on a rub board by hand with either homemade lye soap or store bought P & G. They were wrung, put through again, and hung on a line or fence to dry.

Ironing was done much differently before electricity. Flat irons were heated either on the wood stove or in the fire place on hot coals. The most popular fabric was cotton, which had to be starched and ironed. Men wore white dress shirts altogether. I remember my mother trying to get all the soot off the iron before ironing daddy's white shirts. I have seen her pretty upset when a smudge of soot got on them and she had to wash, starch, and start all over. The electric iron (as you have probably guessed) was one of her first electric appliances.

The phonograph was greatly improved by electrical power. The old Victrola had to be wound up by hand before a record would play, and then the sound was so terrible , compared to the stereo sounds since the age of electricity. Radios were battery operated and not every family had one. Families would gather on Saturday nights at one of the fortunate neighbor's house to listen to "The Grand Old Opry". Static was sometimes so bad that you could hardly hear. Radios were as

much an improvement as anything else after electricity.

Television was something we country people only heard of for a time. People in Timpson would gather on the square at night to watch the set that was left on in "Bo Mc Leory's Hardware and Appliance" store window for that purpose. Also, it was good advertisement. The first family in a community to get a TV had plenty of company on Saturday nights to watch "Gunsmoke".

Cooking has been made much easier. I would say the difference in cooking time between the wood stove and conventional is more than between the conventional and the microwave.

Homes are more comfortable with electricity being used for both heating and cooking. There are many wonderful changes that have come into our lives because of electricity and all the electrical appliances that have been invented.

Some refer to days gone by as "The Good 'Ol Days". I can only say those days will always be memorable, but lets enjoy the many blessings we have today.

It wasn't too bad because we didn't know any different. If you've never had anything, well you don't miss it. Once we got electricity then if we would've had to do without it, then it would be bad but we never had any. Granddaddy nor I, either one when we were growing up, had electricity. So we grew up without electricity.

And we drew the water out of the well with a bucket and rope when we washed our clothes. We had tubs and a rub board. We rubbed them and put them in a black pot, a black wash pot, like you see around over the country. We built a fire around them, and punched them around while they boiled awhile. Then you'd take them up and rinse through

three or four tubs of water. That's the way we washed our clothes.

Then we ironed with black smoothing irons. We'd build a big fire. If it was summertime we'd still build a fire in the fireplace or in the wood stove and get them hot. That's the way we ironed our clothes.

We had two coal oil lamps that we burned. We had two. One was a lamp that Mrs. Harvey Jones' mother-in-law, Mrs. Sam Jones, gave to Grandaddy when he was a little boy before we got married. And the other one belonged to Mrs. Alice Ray. We rented our house when we married and it had this lamp in it, so we bought the lamp from her. We were well off by having two lamps because most people didn't have but one. And we cooked with wood.

We didn't have any radios or televisions. We didn't have anything we really had to have electricity for, because we drew the water up out of the well, washed the clothes, and we didn't know that we had such poor lighting. We thought then that it was alright, because we never did use electricity so we didn't know the difference.

But now if we had to go back to those coal oil lamps, sometimes when the electricity goes off, we'll light one, and you can hardly see your way around. We'd go from one room to the other. We'd have to carry the lamp with us. We still have the lamps. We started out housekeeping, and that's 48 years ago. So, it's a lot different like I said. We didn't really miss it, we didn't think anything about it. We didn't mind it because we didn't know any different. You had more time than you do now.

Herbert Eakin

When we start trying to describe conditions as they existed before electricity

to young people we have a hard time on our hands. That's because there is so much difference, the details were so great, that we couldn't possibly get them all in one discussion.

The most important things I think that came because of electricity was the ability to live better. When we had no electricity we had to put up our food either dry or in cans and jars. That was an expensive way to take care of it, besides often times you lost a lot because of spoilage. You had to be so careful and it was a boring task to get out in the summer and put up enough food for the winter.

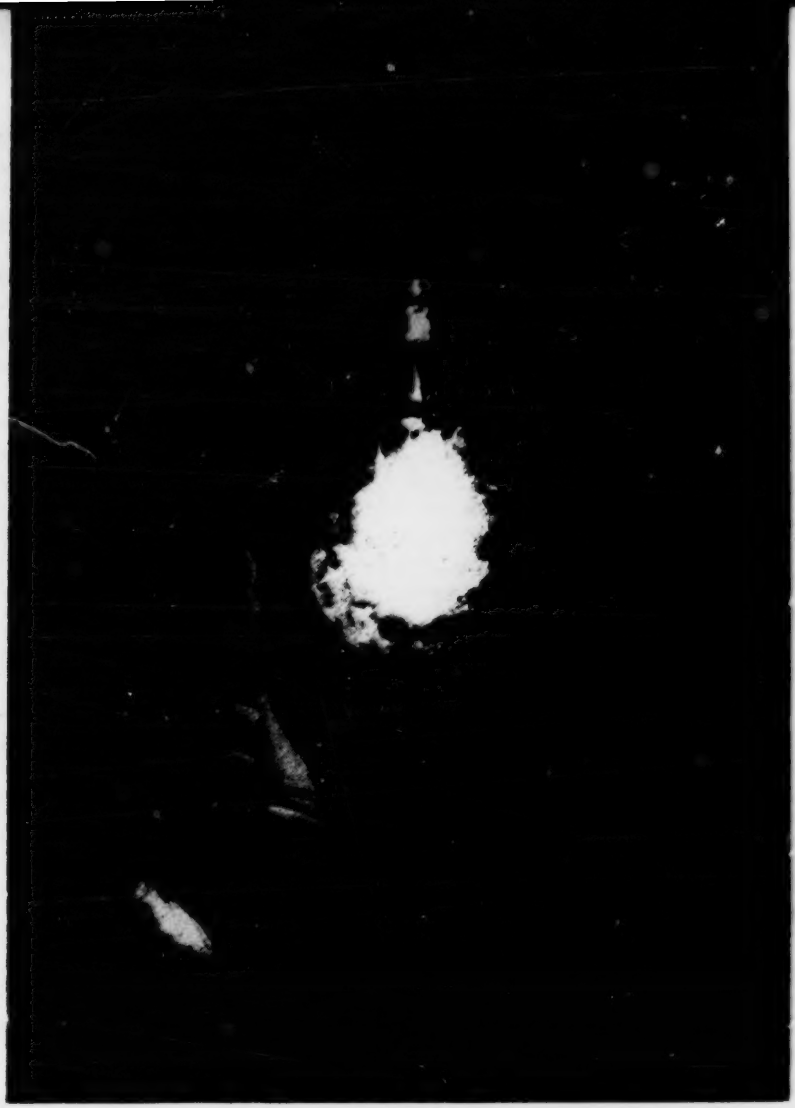
Because of refrigeration after receiving electricity we were through with that sort of job. It was much easier to prepare it and put it in the deep freeze and forget it until time of use. Then it was just like going to the garden after it.

There were many other things that came. Living became a pleasure. It was hard to see how to read at night. One could get close to the lamp and see enough to read but the rest of the family couldn't until that one got tired and it was another's turn.

Whether it was hot or cold we had no circulating air to keep us warm or cool. Most of the buildings then too were either hard to cool or heat and made it unbearable without electricity.

With electricity we had the TV's and the radios that make us able to hear today things that happen anywhere in the world as soon as anybody in big cities or anyone else could. That's almost beyond our ability to appreciate.

When I was a kid we got a paper. I believe the paper came from Timpson once a week. We all chased one another to the mailbox to get it on Friday to see who got the news. That was for a small area. We seldom



The gift of electricity.

heard anything outside our community or maybe the town in which we lived. We had telephones, but that was usually for gossip. We went to one man's house to get him some

private electricity. He said, "I don't need any." We had a right smart of a task to get him to let us go across his land with the line. I was trying to get easements at that time for the line to come through our community. He didn't want it, he said he didn't need it. We finally talked him into letting us cross his place. The minimum then was $2.40 a month, so he decided he could pay it.

The first month he got his bill, it was $2.40. The second and third months it was exactly $2.40. Someone came around to check on our kilowatt usage (the REA). They noticed he wasn't using two or three kilowatts a month. "Look here," they told him, "you can use 25 kilowatts for the same price."

So he told them that he was using it for just exactly what he wanted. He said, "I've lived in this house for fifty years. I've came in from the fields all these years. It would be dark when I got to the house and I'd stumble over every chair in the house trying to find the lamp. Now when I come in, I flip on the switch on the porch and the whole house lights up. I go straight to the lamp and light it and put it where I want it, and go turn the lights off." You can believe that if you want to.

There were other things along at Christmas time that made Christmas more beautiful for us in the rural areas. We could have our Christmas trees and lights.

On the radio along with the news came the entertainment that we were able to enjoy. Many of us were able to hear high caliber sports or listen at the baseball games and football games that were being broadcast.

After TV came we could even see it. Well when I was a kid if you told me things like this would happen I would have told them they were crazy. I never thought I'd get to see a

big league game, let alone see one every day or something like that.

And there are so many things when we start trying to, like I say, put you back into the days when we had no electricity. It staggers me to bring up points that might be of interest to you. But these are a few things. In washing we used an old rub board. We had to draw that water out of the well. Some of the wells were real deep and on wash day every kid had a chore. Some got wood and built a fire. Some drew the water. And some bent over the tub with the rub board rubbing. You know now it's a matter of fact, you just go over and get clean clothes and don't know how they got there so easily. It took the entire family the whole day to wash and bring in the clothes, and to iron them and put them away. It was a full day's work.

Now we have the washing machine and the dryer, and the material that doesn't have to be ironed. Shirts and pants can be put in the washer and dryer and then worn to school. That's a lot of difference. Everything went through the same improvement that washing did. Take cooking for instance. It was a chore to get wood in the winter time, more especially, dry wood to cook with. It had to be cut and brought in every night. We made a fire the next morning to wake us. The old wood stove would get hot and the fireplace had to get warm before you could cook. So cooking, along with heating and lighting, was a great improvement.

Take for instance, how often did the iceman come? He came every other day. In 1936-37 I was the iceman. I hauled ice to the rural homes and I'd make my same route. I had two routes. Today I would got north of Timpson and my route was about a hundred miles long. I would carry a load of ice out every morning. I get it in 50 and 100 pound blocks.

It wouldn't take me long to unload. So, I'd go get another load until the day was over at about 5:00. The next day I'd go south of Timpson around Huber and back up my old road to the highway.

The old ice boxes were, well many of them were homemade. They made them chest-like. They are like our chest freezers now. They would build a box in a box. They put sawdust between the boxes for insulation. They would hold ice real well. The only job about it was with those that had boxes where they wanted it put into the top. The hundred pound block was heavy for my 130 pounds, so I had to get the lady of the house to help me put 100 pounds of ice into the box. They didn't want it chipped up because it would melt.

Very few had Coolerators. It was a bought box called a Coolerator. They usually took 50 pounds. They were better insulated and the ice would last them two days.

They had to be very particular with the ice. Sometimes they would use a little for tea, but most of the time they would rather have refrigeration than tea. For tea they might buy a 12 1/2 pound block so they wouldn't have to hack on their block. We sold the ice for 50 cents a hundred and delivered it in the houses. A 50 pound block would cost you 25 cents. I got the ice for 25 cents a hundred to deliver. That's a hard days work.

Many people would want to trade you eggs so I carried an egg crate along to help them. I would give them a 50 pound block of ice for a dozen eggs. I'd take them to town and sell them. That was part of the business and I had to keep it. I was newly married and had no garden. So, I would take things I could eat at home. At home the powered tools made a big difference. The ones operated by electricity made work much faster and easier. It was hard with some of the manuals tools.

Betty Woolan

Well, before electricity we used lanterns, and globe lamps (that's lamps with a globe that sat on top), and candles, and Aladdin lamps for light. The Aladdin lamp was quite an improvement over the kerosene lamp. It had a cone shaped piece in the middle that when the lamp got real hot it really put out a lot of light. But it was hard to read and study or read the Bible, or whatever you were going to do with just a kerosene lamp. But everyday the globes and wicks that you turned up in the lamps and lanterns had to be cleaned, in order to keep the light going. Lanterns were used at night to go outside to the barn to see if livestock was all right, or go out to the chicken house to check if you heard something out bothering the chickens, or you used it to go to the outhouse. The lanterns had to be cleaned also. But they were made out of metal. They had a frame to protect them. If you bumped it against something it didn't break very easily. It was always good to carry a lantern outside with you because you never knew what you were going to find. Now these lanterns too were also used for heating in a brooder house, if you were raising little chickens. You would turn a galvanized tube upside down on a stack of bricks that you used as legs. You'd turn the tub upside down, and then you'd put a couple of bricks on the floor. In the middle of where the tube was turned upside down you'd put a lantern up on it. And that would create heat in the brooder house for the baby chicks. Otherwise they'd stack up and kill themselves trying to keep warm. Without a mother to sit under them. They had to have some way to keep warm. But if you weren't raising a bunch of chickens, you let your hens set on the egg until they were hatched. And then the mother

hen would take care of them herself. You didn't have to worry a lot.

Everybody cooked with wood stoves. They had wood stoves for heat. And to iron clothes we had what you called flat irons. And you'd set them on the stove and let them get hot. And you'd take one iron and start ironing with it. When it started cooling down you'd set it back down on the stove, and get another iron, you got a fresh heated iron. That's how we got our ironing done.

Those irons and hot bricks were used at night. We'd wrap them in newspaper at night to put in the bed with us at our feet to keep us warm. The houses weren't really insulated like they are now. And it got pretty cold by

8. The excitement of getting electric appliances.

morning time. It sure did help to have a hot iron to carry to bed with to keep the bed warm. The wood stoves heated the living room and the kitchen. The bedrooms were just like walking outside. They were that cold.

The biggest problem without electricity was preserving foods. So for butchering a hog, beef, or something like that you used a smoke house. Or you could use sugar cane, to preserve hams. Or you could fry your sausage and put it down in crocks and pour lard over it. And that was really the best way to preserve meats like that. And some people cold packed their food.

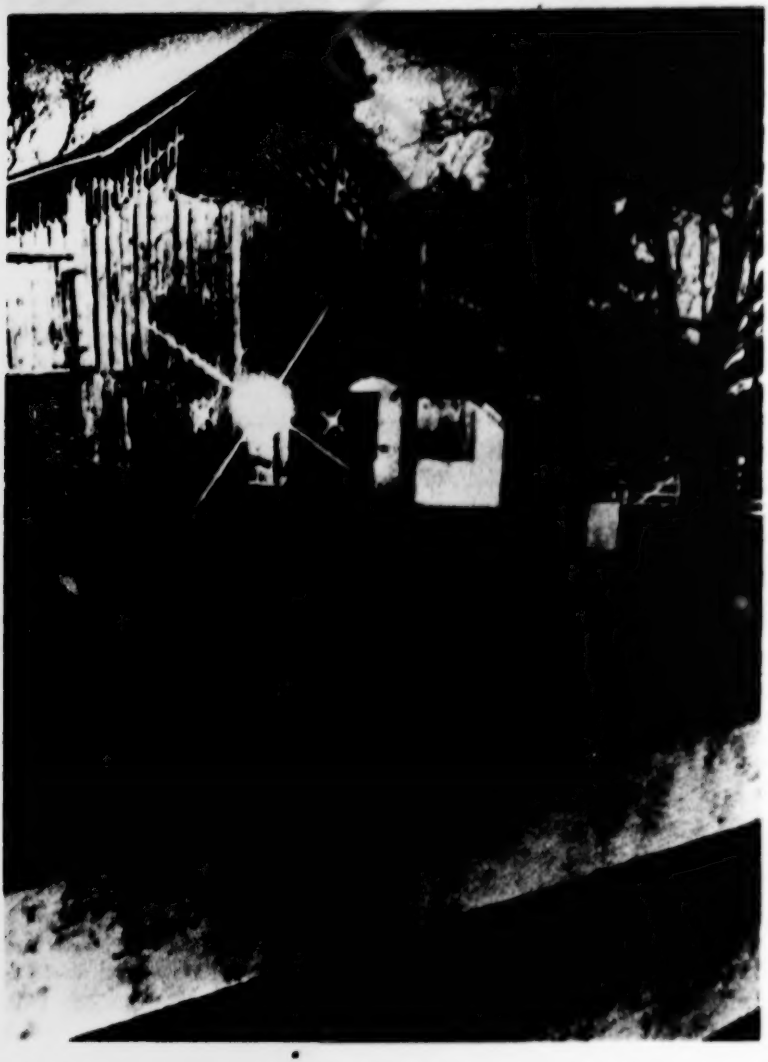
You had the problem with your milk and butter and things that would perish in a short time, in the summer. In the winter it was not a problem because you could have a box outside to protect the food from dogs, cats, or whatever. And you could set your food down in there. But the summer time was a problem. Lots of people would dig a big square hole in the ground and line it with newspaper to keep the food clean. And they'd buy a big block of ice (50 or 100 pounds) and put it down in the middle. And it didn't matter if the ice melted because it just went down into the ground. And then this would have a cover over that. And many people preserved their milk by putting it down in a well or cistern.

Mickey Spencer

Well there's no comparison. The days before electricity just were bad as far as I'm concerned, compared to what we have now. I'm a concrete, heating, and air man myself. I like the modern, if you call it modern, convenience. I don't call them conveniences,

I think they're almost necessities now to have some of these things. Where I grew up on th Gulf Coast around Houston, it was so humid and hot all the time, well eight months out of the year. In school I can remember we would just not be able to write because sweat would fall on your paper. We didn't have ball point pens. The ink would just run all over the paper. And it was a problem. The heat was bad even though we were off during the summer, what we considered summer months. No they didn't turn us out if it got too hot. The only time we got out was when it snowed. And I can't ever remember it snowing when I was in school. So we never did get out for that. I think the people now days have more time for the necessities of life than we did back then. Because then you either spent a whole lot of time trying to keep warm or trying to keep cool. To see around the house we had flash lights, candles, kerosene lamps. And I think finally we got a couple of Coleman gasoline lanterns. Boy, that was a God send. They were so much brighter than what I was used to. We never did have an explosion with one. We were always cautious with them. But they were dangerous, because you used gas. Candles of course we didn't like, they were open flame. Kerosene lanterns were kind of a yellowish light, weren't too bright and they did give off an odor to a certain extent. The kerosene then wasn't as good as it is now. Just with a flashlight doing homework was impossible, it wasn't very good to do that. For outdoors, now flashlights are good. The main way was the kerosene lanterns, flashlights, candles, gasoline lanterns.

To heat our home we had a wood stove. It would really get hot, glow red as they would say. Of course they were so inefficient most of the heat would go up the chimney. But, I love a wood fire. It's good heat, but so



Electric lights could stretch the day on the farm.

inefficient. They have some now that are more efficient. But still we didn't have anything to force the air. It was all by convection. Most of the air rose to the top of the house. We had an old two story house, so it helped

upstairs. To heat our beds at night, we would heat bricks and wrap paper around them and put it in the bed. That was a great way to warm your feet. It was one of our favorite ways to keep warm at night. I didn't like the water bottles because if it ever burst you're in big trouble. You really couldn't keep your food from spoiling without an electric refrigerator. Ice really didn't get the job done too well. You always had to keep a steady supply of ice. So if you cooled drinks you would use a pretty good bit of it. You would get ice only two or three days a week.

We washed our clothes in big black wash pots outside. I was a great fire builder, and stroked the old clothes too. We had one of those poles, and used lye soap. And after the third bunch of clothes they didn't get too clean. Then you would rinse them. I've rinsed many clothes. Then we got an old timey washer that had a handle and half round tub. Then you would push that handle back and forth. That helped a whole lot. We didn't have to light the fire.

The electric sewing machines are better than the old ones. We had an old treadle. I did some sewing on it. I was about nine years old when my baby sister was born and I remember hemming her a bunch of diapers. The treadle sewing machine was a lot easier to fix than the electric sewing machines we have now.

I did my homework by a kerosene lantern, that was the best. I think I was in about the third grade when we got electricity. I'm glad we got those electric lights. It was definitely cheaper before electricity. Since the cost for electricity has been going up, it is quite expensive. But I wouldn't trade it for the kerosene lamps we used to have.

We washed dishes by heating water, have a pan for washing, and sometimes we would use hot water to rinse the dishes. We bathed in

#3 washtubs. I couldn't fit in one now. But it was the size everyone used. You would heat water to the temperature you wanted it. I always wanted to be first because after the third or fourth person bathed, the water was already pretty dirty. I remember one thing we did during the summer. We got a fifty gallon barrel and ran a hose in it, and hung it up and put a tarp around it. And boy did it get hot during the summer. That water would be so cool. It felt so good. That was the main thing during the summer.

I really don't miss the old days. I'm like I said, a modern man. Every day is better than the one before.

H. D. Beasley

In wood carving the basic thing is you have to figure out what you're going to make in your mind. Then when you figure out what you're going to make, you get yourself a piece of wood of the type you want to make your object out of. Then you need a knife, knives, or mechanical machines to work on it with. I have a piece of cedar wood in my pocket here that I can make a miniature ball bat out of like a regular bat. But if you ruin it, the wood has challenged you. You have to go back and start all over again whenever you ruin a piece of wood, see.

My dad was a wood carver. He built a set of wood straight chairs, swings, and stuff like that. Also, he built all of his crop tools, hoe handles, axe handles, plow stock beams and all this sort of stuff. He built wagon wheels, wagon spokes, wagon beds too. He would even make the wooden frames that pull the wagon. He was pretty good at it. I guess out of four brothers I'm the only one this fell back on. I enjoy wood carving. If I run

into a problem, I have a good friend that is a wood carver and he can help me out with it. Since I've been into wood carving I have repaired five rocking chairs over 100 years old. I have taken wooden chairs like at the dining table and fixed them too. The round gets broken or the legs get broken. I can make another one almost the same identical piece to go back in it. I enjoy working with wood. I have a set of wooden spoons on the wall that I made; I also have a pair in a museum in Colorado. I make axe handles, scoops, wooden spoons. I sell the axe handles for five dollars.

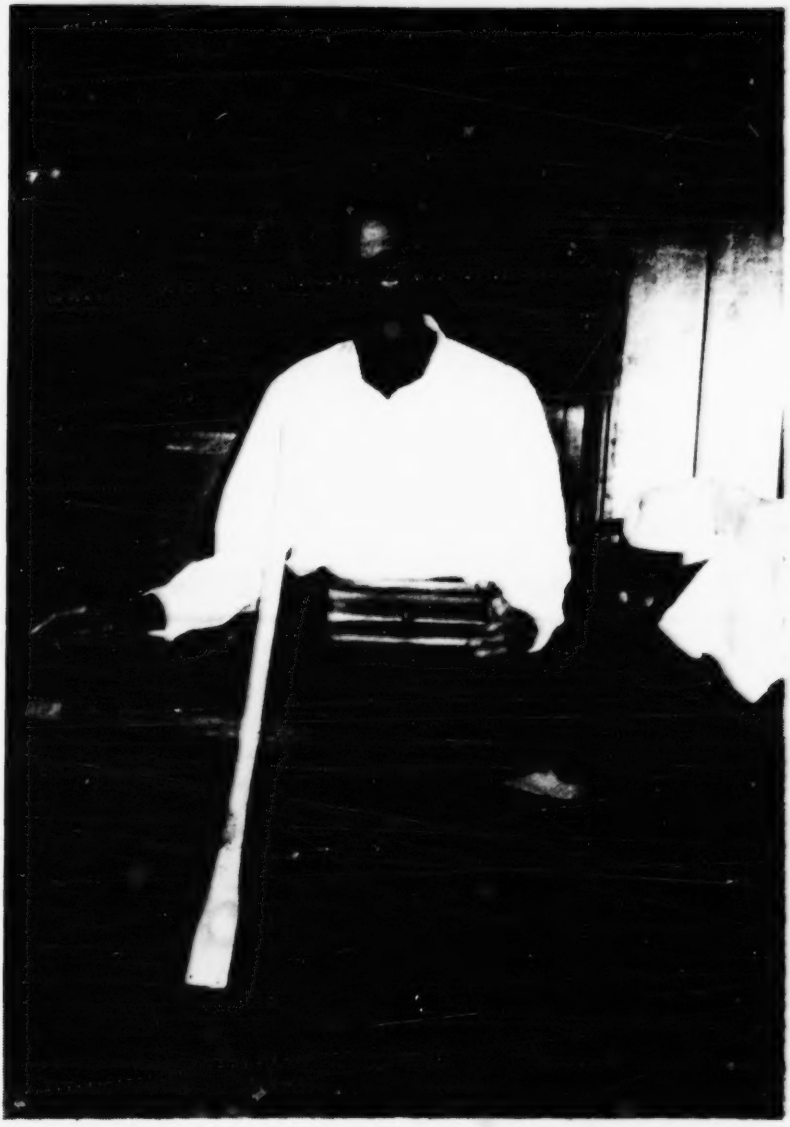
I enjoy working with wood. Cedar wood is a challenge. I had four pieces of wood to make the little scoop like you've got, and I broke three of them. I had one left. My wife said, "I would just quit." And I said "Nah, the wood has challenged me." I said "I have got to start over to make what I'm going to make." So I started over again.

Well, I have been carving wood since I was 14 or 15 years old, and I love it. There is still a lot for me to learn about it. This buddy of mine, A. D. Peveto, is a good wood carver. He has a glass hutch in his living room eight feet by I don't know how long. He has got just anything in it that you want to look at. I built this coffee table right here. Really, to get down to the knitty gritty, you just get a knife and piece of wood and get after it. When I do wood carving all I want to do is the wood work, not the staining or any of that. I get a thrill out of working with wood. I have worked for the Highway Department for 32 years and after I put this shop in out here, I have come in off of that road just as tired as a log wagon. I'd just get me a piece of wood and put it in that wood layer and start whittling and get just as relaxed as you had ever seen. I love

it. I love to do wood work like a fellow who ruins a shop that does steel work. They're artists at it, and I try to do art in my wood work. I made some candle holders too. I believe I've made six pair of them, if I'm not mistaken. It depends on the piece really as to how long it takes. This holder right here would take an hour.

See, I have a turning lathe that I put it in, in my shop see. I have a ball bat in it now that I'm making for Torey Hooper. I make lots of ball bats. He's so rough playing baseball `till he breaks his bat. I had some tough timber to make one out of. So I've got it out there. But I don't want to cut it too small on the end that the ball hits because I'm afraid I'll get it too small for him. He wants it a certain size. I'm waiting for him to come see if I've got it down right, or if I got it too little, or if needs to be cut down some more. It takes about an hour and a half to make a bat. It depends on the type of wood you want it made out of.

I also make name signs and I have made coat racks. One's down at the fire station and there's one at the telephone company. I got $25.00 for the coat rack at the telephone company, and I donated one to the fire station. Like I say, I love wood carving. If I run into a problem, I'll walk out of the shop and leave it, and I'll go walk around so that it doesn't get boring. That way I get a little rest from it before I go back.



43